

MISCELLANEOUS NOTES

1. THE JACKAL, *CANIS AUREUS* LINN. — A NOTE ON SOME VARIATIONS

The jackal *Canis aureus* Linnaeus shows geographic variations in coat colour. R.C. Wroughton, 1916 described *Canis indicus* (with two subspecies - *Canis indicus indicus*, *Canis indicus kola*). He also reported *Canis naria* from India, and *Canis lanka* from Sri Lanka. Prater (1980) treated Indian jackals as a single species having three races (*Canis aureus aureus* Linnaeus, *Canis aureus indicus* Hodgson and *Canis aureus naria* Wroughton) and the Sri Lankan race as *Canis aureus lanka* Wroughton. The north Indian races are generally tawny but with their chin and throat white and underside paler or buff in colour. The grizzled pattern of the back is characteristic of the west-coast race (*Canis aureus naria*). However, occurrence of black variants of the species in North India were reported earlier (Prater, 1980).

A study of three jackals kept in captivity at the Parassinikadavu snake park, Kannur dist., Kerala indicate that the colour variation and certain other features like size of the animal and its muzzle shape may not be entirely of geographical significance, as all the three individuals obtained from the same district exhibit profound differences in these characters.

One individual *almost black with very few grey hairs has a light area around the eyes and a white spot on the chest. This individual appeared to be more aggressive. Black variants reported

earlier suggest the possibility that it might be a cross between a dog and a jackal. This one is also the largest among the three. Occurrence of hybrid dog-jackals was previously reported by Donald (1948). The second* individual is like that of the north Indian race in colour and is smaller than the black one, but a little larger than the third* one. The smallest individual among the three, characterised by the grizzled colour, though typical of the west-coast race, is peculiar in having its tail tip white in colour, a feature non-characteristic of the species.

Since all the three jackals observed are obtained from the same area (Kannur dist. Kerala), they augment the need for further study of variations in populations and of possible hybrid forms of jackals.

The author is grateful to the Director, Zoological Survey of India, Calcutta and the Officer-in-Charge, Zoological Survey of India, Calicut for facilities and encouragement. He also thanks the authorities of Parassinikadavu Snake Park for the help rendered.

* A photograph of all three variants has been provided by the author but is not of printable quality. — Ed.

June 13, 1997

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2. DIET OF THE BROWN PALM CIVET (*PARADOXURUS JERDONII*) IN KALAKAD-MUNDANTHURAI TIGER RESERVE, TAMIL NADU

On 19 June 1995 at about 0630 hrs when we were driving down from upper Kothayar to Kakachi, Kalakad Mundanthurai Tiger Reserve, we noticed a small brown animal lying by the

side of the road. On closer examination we found it to be the brown palm civet (*Paradoxurus jerdoni*). It had a uniform brown coat with a white tail tip. The animal was fresh and must have died